

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 COME-00 TRSE-00 SS-15 SP-02 NSC-05

CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 AID-05 OMB-01 /051 W

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R 301146Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8372

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E.O. 11652: GUDS

TAGS: PFOR, GB, US

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH PRESIDENT BONGO-- ECONOMIC COUNSELOR

REF: STATE 233044

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT BONGO REITERATED REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE
IN FINDING AMERICAN TO SERVE AS ECONOMIC COUNSELOR IN
PRESIDENCY, AND SUGGESTED DEPARTMENT CONSULT WITH SUCH
PRIVATE SECTOR SOURCES OF TALENT AS TEMPLESMAN AND CITIBANK.
END SUMMARY.

1. IN COURSE MEETING WITH PRESIDENT BONGO SEPTEMBER 29, HE
AGAIN MENTIONED HIS INTEEST IN HAVING ECONIMC COUNSELORS
IN PRESIDENCY REPRESENTING MAJOR TRADINGPARTNERS OTHER
THAN FRANCE, AND SPECIFIED US, GERMANY AND ITALY IN THIS
REGARD. HE REITERATED HIS REQUEST THAT USG HELP HIM FIND
APPROPRIATE INDIVICUAL TO FILL THIS POSITION.

2. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION,PRESIDENT SAID HE HAD ALSO
DISCUSSED THIS MATTER WITH MAURICE TEMPLESMAN DURING
HIS NEW YORK VISIT AND HAD ASKED LATTER TO HELP AS WELL
WITH TALENT SEARCH. HE THOUGHT DEPARTMENT MIGHT USEFULLY
CONSULT FURTHER WITH TEMPLEMAN ON QUESTION, AND AGREED THAT
TEMPLESMAN MIGHT BE ABLE TO COME UP WITH QUALIFIED
INDIVIDUAL FROM HIS OWN STAFF. PRESIDENT SAID HE HOPED
TO FIND BILINGUAL AMERICAN WITH EXTNESIVE KNOWLEDGE OF
US COPRORATE SCENE WHO COULD HANDLE ALL NEGOTIATIONS, ORAL
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AND WRITTEN, WITH AMERICAN FIRMS INTERESTED IN GABON. IDEAL

CANDIDATE WOULD HAVE SOLID BACKGROUND IN PRIVATE BUSINESS,
PERHAPS BANKINGFIELD, WHICH LED HIM TO FURHTER SUGGESTION
THAT CITIBANKMIGHT ALSO BE SOURCE FOR SUCH ADVISER.

3. IN SEPARATE DISCUSSION, CABINET DIRECTOR MAYILA SAID
CONTRACT WITH APPROPRIATE INDIVIDUALWOULD BE INDIVIDUALLY
NEGOTIATED AND WOULDNORMALY INCLUDE HOUSING, CAR AND
VACATION EVERY TWO YEARS. HE DECLINED SPECIFY SALARY LEVEL,
SAYING THIS WOULD HAVE TO DEPEND ON INDIVIDUAL QUALIFICATIONS
AND RESULT OF NEGOTIATIONS.

4. COMMENT: BELIEVE IT WOULD BE IN OUR BEST INTEREST TO
LEAVE SEARCH FOR COUNSELOR IN PRIVATE HANDS TO MAXIMUM
EXTENT POSSIBLE, WITH TEMPLESMAN BY FAR BEST PLACED TO MAKE
FINAL RECOMMENDATIN TO BONGO. GIVEN CLOSE PERSONAL
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEMPLESMAND AND BONGO, INDIVIDUAL
SELECTED BY FORMER WOULD BE ASSURED OF SUBSTANTIAL
PRESIDENTIAL CONFIDENCE FROM OUTSET,AND UNLIKE USG
SELECTION WOULD NOT HAVE PROVE CONSTANTLY THAT HIS
PRIMARY LOYALTY IS TO BONGO RATHER THAN TO HIS HOME
GOVERNMENT. TEMPLESMAN AND HIS LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES
HAVE ALWAYS BEEN COMPLETELY OPEN WITH EMBASSY, AND WE
WOULD HOPE SIMILAR RELATIONSHIP OF MUTUAL SUPPORT WOULD
BE ESTIABLISHED WITH ANYONE HE RECOMMENDED FOR POSITION
IN PRESIDENCY. SAME IS ALSO TRUEOF CITIBANK, WHICH
PRESIDENT NOTE AS POSSIBLE SOURCE OF SUITABLE CANDIDATE.
THOUGHBANK DESIGNEE WOULD LACK SPECIAL CACHET DERIVED
FROM TEMPLESMAN-BONGON TIE.

5. IN ANY EVENT, AMERICAN COUNSELOR IN PRESIDENCY WOULD
REQUIRE EXCEPTIONAL DEGREE OF SELF RELIANCE AND ADPATABILTY.
CANDIDATES SHOULD BE UNDER NO ILLUSINS ABOUT DIFFICULTIES
THEY WOULD FACE IN ESTABLISHING THEMSELVES VIS A VIS
ENTRENCHED FRENCH INFLUENCES AND IN MAINTAINING DIRECT
ACCESS TO PRESIDENT ON WHICH THEIR SUCCESS WOULD DEPEND.
DESPITE THESE DIFFUCLTIES, HOWEVER, WE AGREE THAT BONGOS
INTEREST IN AMERICAN COUNSELOR OFFERS OPPORTUNITY WELL
WORTH PURSUING, AND WE HOPE THAT SUITABLE INDIVIDUAL CAN
BE FOUND THROUGH APPROPRIATE CONSULTATION WITH SUCH PRIVATE
SECTOR SOURCES AS TEMPLESMAN AND CITIBANK. STEIGMAN
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, MEETINGS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 SEP 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: cahillha
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976LIBREV01957
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760369-1123
From: LIBREVILLE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t1976093/aaaaacfn.tel
Line Count: 107
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 STATE 233044
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: cahillha
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 JUN 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <08 OCT 2004 by cahillha>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MEETING WITH PRESIDENT BONGO-- ECONOMIC COUNSELOR
TAGS: PFOR, GB, US, (BONGO, ALBERT BERNARD)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006